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ABSTRACT

The study described in this report was conducted to assess peer coaching, a technique selected by the School District of Philadelphia as a means of encouraging the professional growth and ongoing development of teachers working with limited-English-proficient students. This report is an end-of-year assessment of the status of peer coaching in 32 schools and follows up on a report entitled "An Assessment of Peer Coaching Training and Practice in New Instructional Model Schools," March 1991. The current report was designed to assess 111 teachers' responses to 3 staff development workshops which took place in spring 1991 and to assess the extent to which peer coaching is currently being implemented by teachers trained in the technique. Data were obtained through a telephone survey of 21 schools, and a follow-up to an in-depth study was conducted in 11 randomly selected schools. Schools participating in the survey reported that 16 teams were in place as of June 1991. Findings suggest that the school district has been successful in attracting a large number of teachers to peer coaching workshops. However, the number of teachers currently implementing peer coaching is relatively small. The need for greater follow-up is recommended along with encouragement of peer coaching at the individual school level. (Author/LL)

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The School District of Philadelphia

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THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

AN ASSESSMENT OF PEER COACHING TRAINING
AND PRACTICE IN NEW INSTRUCTIONAL
MODEL SCHOOLS

FINAL REPORT

Report No. 9203
August, 1991

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THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an end-of-year assessment of the status of peer coaching in the 32 schools which implemented the New Instructional Models. It is a follow-up to the report entitled, "An Assessment of Peer Coaching Training and Practice in New Instructional Model Schools," #9115 March 1991.

The current report was designed to assess teachers' responses to the staff development workshops which took place in Spring 1991, and to assess the extent to which peer coaching is currently being implemented by teachers who have been trained in the techniques of peer coaching.

During the period between March 1990 and March 1991, a total of 111 teachers were trained in peer coaching in three staff development workshops.

Data on the implementation of peer coaching were obtained through a telephone survey of 21 schools. The schools participating in the telephone survey reported that 16 teams were in place as of June 1991. This represents an increase of three teams over the number reported in March 1991.

An in-depth study was planned for eleven randomly selected schools. Data from March 1991 showed that there were five peer coaching teams among the eleven schools. By May 1991, however, this number was reduced

to three teams at two schools. These three teams were interviewed by evaluators.

Therefore, as of June 1991, there were a total of 19 peer coaching teams. This represents 34% of the number of teachers who were trained in the staff development workshops on peer coaching.

In conclusion, the School District has been successful in attracting a large number of teachers to the peer coaching workshops. However, the number of teachers currently implementing peer coaching is relatively small. This suggests that there needs to be greater follow-up and encouragement of peer coaching at the individual school level.

INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In the 1990-91 school year, seven high schools, three middle schools and twenty-two elementary schools serving Asian students adopted the New Instructional Models outlined in the Remedial Plan for Services to Asian LEP Students. Of these thirty-two schools, seven had participated in the program in previous years: University City High, South Philadelphia High, Olney High, Furness High, Cooke Middle, Kirkbride Elementary, and Southwark Elementary.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Peer coaching is a technique which has been selected by the School District of Philadelphia as a means of encouraging the professional growth and on-going development of teachers working with Limited-English Proficient (LEP) students.

This report is an end-of-year assessment of the status of peer coaching in the 32 New Instructional Model schools and a follow-up to the report entitled, "An Assessment of Peer Coaching Training and Practice in New Instructional Model Schools," #9115 March 1991. The March report surveyed the type and quality of staff development in peer coaching, the extent to which peer coaching was being implemented and the reported findings of an in-depth study conducted in eleven randomly selected schools.

The current report describes the peer coaching staff development which took place between March and June 1991 and examines the progress of the peer coaching teams which were established in 1990-91 in the New Instructional Model schools.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The progress of teams involved in peer coaching was studied in two ways: 1) a telephone survey was conducted at twenty-one New Instructional Model schools, and 2) a follow-up to the in-depth study was conducted at the eleven randomly selected schools. However, by May 1991, only two of four schools in the in-depth study still had peer coaching teams. The teams at two secondary schools either lost personnel or found their schedules did not permit them to continue with peer coaching. The peer coaches at the two other schools were interviewed as a follow-up to the interviews which had been conducted in January 1991. The results of the telephone survey are found on page 6. The results of the in-depth study are found on page 7.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Peer coaching has been defined as "in-class training by a supportive partner who helps a teacher correctly apply skills learned in a workshop" (Joyce and Showers, 1982).^{*} For further details on the concept of peer coaching, please refer to Report #9115, "An Assessment of Peer Coaching Training and Practice in New Instructional Model Schools," March 1991.

^{*} Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1982). The coaching of teaching. Educational Leadership, 40, (2), 4-10.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN PEER COACHING

Beginning in the Spring of 1990, a series of workshops was offered by the Office of Language Minority Programs in order to present the concepts and techniques of peer coaching. There were three official training workshops: March 2-3, 1990, November 2-3, 1990, and March 2, 1991. The total number of teachers trained was 111. An additional workshop on August 27-29, 1990 provided information, but not training, in peer coaching. An evaluation of these sessions was provided in Report #9115.

A series of networking seminars for teachers who were participating in peer coaching was held during the Spring of 1991. The purpose of the seminars was to provide a forum where teachers could discuss their concerns, successes, and frustrations. These sessions were held on March 5, 1991, April 16, 1991, May 7, 1991, and May 21, 1991. A total of 28 teachers attended at least one of the networking seminars. Fifteen of the 28 had been previously trained at one of the training workshops. The largest number of teachers attending one session was 22; the smallest number of participants was 15.

A survey of the four networking sessions asked participants whether the sessions had been helpful and if so, in what ways future workshops could be helpful to peer coaching teams.

The survey, which was completed by 16 of a total of 28 workshop participants, indicated that all participants found the networking sessions helpful and that they particularly appreciated the presentation of videotaped lessons.

Thirteen of the sixteen respondents replied to the survey question asking how many times they had observed and conferenced with one another. The majority (n=8) indicated that they had observed and conferenced with their partner one to three times during the school year.

Networking session participants' suggestions for future workshops included:

- . More demonstrations by Philadelphia teachers
- . Discussion of academic tasks other than reading
- . Continuation of discussions on cooperative learning and combining cooperative learning with the ESOL curriculum

SURVEY OF SCHOOLS

A telephone survey was conducted during the month of June 1991 in order to ascertain the status of peer coaching at the twenty-one schools which were not part of the in-depth study. The twenty-one schools included seventeen* elementary schools and four secondary schools.

As reported in March 1991 (Report #9115), a total of thirteen peer coaching teams had been formed in seven of the seventeen elementary schools and one of the four secondary schools.

Since March, one elementary school which previously had no peer coaching team reported adding two teams, and another elementary school which had no team reported adding one team. Therefore, as of June 1991 a total of 16 teams were reported to exist. For details on the topics chosen by the peer coaching teams in the survey schools, please refer to the March 1991 report.

* This number was mistakenly reported as 19 in the March 1991 report.

IN-DEPTH STUDY

During the month of May 1991, the in-depth study, which was reported in March 1991, was extended to follow up on the peer coaching teams that had been formed. This study included eleven schools which had been randomly selected earlier in the year: Kensington, South Philadelphia, Olney, and University City High Schools, Cooke, and Vare Middle Schools, Birney, Childs, Drew, Olney, and Southwark Elementary Schools.

As of March 1991, of the eleven schools in the sample, five peer coaching teams had been formed at two elementary schools and two secondary schools. One of the elementary schools had two teams.

As of May 1991, the teams at the secondary schools had ceased to exist. At one school, one team member had been a long-term substitute who was transferred. At the other secondary school, the teachers stated that their schedules were too busy to allow them to do peer coaching. The school hoped to establish another team in Fall 1991.

As of May 1991 there were three peer coaching teams at two elementary schools.

The three teams were interviewed by evaluators in May 1991 in order to ascertain their experiences with peer coaching. The first team stated that they had observed and held conferences 18 times during the year. The second team reported that they met 15-20 times during the year. The third team reported that one team member observed 4-5 times,

but the other team member had observed only once because she could not get anyone to cover her class. The teams reported that they worked on the following topics:

- . cooperative learning
- . keeping children on task
- . asking inferential questions
- . critical thinking skills
- . asking questions in different ways
- . monitoring teacher circulation in class

When asked how helpful their conferences had been in reaching their peer coaching goals, the first team (both teachers) stated that the conferences were very helpful in terms of becoming aware of the goals they wanted to reach. They liked the fact that their observations were not as intimidating as when they were being observed by an administrator.

The second team (both teachers) also felt that their conferences had been productive. They stated that intensive feedback on specific goals was a "good learning experience." One teacher said that the conferences "make you more aware of what you are saying and how you are teaching children, and they allow you to explore the goals you had planned." In the third team, one member stated that the conferences were very helpful; the other member of the team said that they were "so-so."

When asked whether they would do peer coaching again, all members of all three teams said that they would like to repeat the experience. The

first team noted that they felt very comfortable with one another. The second team stated that they enjoyed setting goals and seeing them completed. The third team said they liked peer coaching because "it is a broadening experience. You note things you never picked up before." When asked what advice or recommendations they would give to other teachers about peer coaching, the teachers made the following suggestions:

- . establish goals in the preplanning stage and carefully follow the guidelines of the model.
- . set specific goals in the areas that need to be addressed
- . try to obtain release time so that teachers can more easily observe and conference with one another

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations proposed in the report of March 1991 are still pertinent. The previous report noted that while the School District has provided numerous opportunities for training in peer coaching and has attracted a large number of teachers to these workshops, relatively few of the trained teachers chose to implement peer coaching at their schools. This suggests that there needs to be greater follow-up and encouragement of peer coaching at the individual school level. For more specific recommendations, please refer to the March 1991 report.